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Mrs. An

AP European History

FRQ Unification of Italy and Germany

There were many factors that prevented the development of a unified German state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The political aspects of the peace of Westphalia, constant warfare, lack of strong leadership, and the equal power of Prussia and Austria along with the religious aspects of the Thirty Year's War and its economic devastation, Protestant Reformation and wars of religion, Shmalkaldic League, and Peace of Augsburg prevented the development of a unified Germany.

Politically, the Peace of Westphalia, constant warfare, lack of a strong and powerful leader, and the power of Prussia and Austria prevented the development of a unified German state during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To begin, the Peace of Westphalia was signed in order to end the Thirty Year's War. In this treaty, Germany was split up into over three hundred different states ruled by nobles or princes who enforced a different religion and different policies than the king. Although this treaty did end the war, it ultimately weakened Germany or the Holy Roman Empire and prevented the development of a unified Germany. Because Germany was split into so many states, there could be no political, or even religious, unity, while the power of the emperor was also weakened. Thus, because there could be no political unity, the Peace of Westphalia proved to be a factor that prevented the formation of a unified Germany. Furthermore, while serving as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V fought many wars. The Ottoman Turks wished to expand their territory and allied with France's Francis I to fight against Charles V and his empire. This constant warfare with other territories began to weaken Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, preventing the development of a unified state. Also, though the Thirty Year's War was primarily religious, it also had various political conflicts. During this war, other countries saw a chance to weaken Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. The emperor, therefore, could not focus on political unity; rather, he had to turn his attention to this fighting with much of the rest of Europe. This war also caused much internal conflict where the German nobles wanted local control and the emperor wanted central power. Because of this internal conflict, Germany ultimately could not unify politically. Moreover, the emperor was now elected by seven electors, which resulted in weak leaders being elected because the electors just wanted more power. Thus, the emperor would have little to no power over these states. Also, these seven electors disagreed often and there was, therefore, no centralized unity, even within these states. Because of this lack of necessary leadership, Germany was unable to develop a unified state. Finally, the equal powers of Prussia and Austria disabled them from ever taking charge and unifying Germany because one always prevented the other from politically uniting. Germany couldn’t unify until Prussia defeated Austria and kicked them out of German Confederation. Thus, the development of a unified state was not possible until Prussia rose to power to force unification. To conclude, because of the peace of Westphalia, constant warfare, lack of strong leadership, and the equal power of Prussia and Austria, Germany was unable to form a unified state during this time period.

Religiously, the Thirty Year's War and its economic devastation, Protestant Reformation and wars of religion, Shmalkaldic League, and Peace of Augsburg prevented the development of a unified Germany during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To begin, the Thirty Year’s War began as the Calvinists in the Holy Roman Empire tried to become recognized officially and caused major religious conflicts within Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. Not only was Germany fighting against much of the rest of Europe, but there were also civil wars in Germany between Protestants, Catholics, and Calvinists. These civil wars prevented Germany and the Holy Roman Empire to unify religiously, thus preventing the formation of a unified German state. While the Thirty Year’s war prevented religious and political unity, it also caused economic devastation within the German states. By the end of the Thirty Year’s War, though only few German states will still participating, a brutal war was fought on their land. The French and the Swedish armies marched throughout the states. Because of this, many of the peasants were killed and the agriculture was horribly destroyed. This period of war and economic devastation caused the German states to worry about recovering individually and prevented any unification. Furthermore, the religious consequences of the Protestant Reformation and the wars of religion allowed for no religious unity in Germany. After Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Thesis on the Church door, there was much argument over religious doctrine. The nobles and princes in Germany saw this as an opportunity to become more independent, so religious wars between Lutherans and Catholics broke out. Also, the nobles and princes enforced a different religion than the emperor in order to gain power over him. These events caused there to be no religious unity within the Holy Roman Empire and therefore prevented the development of a unified Germany. Additionally, to ultimately begin the wars of religion, a group of German nobles who joined in with Luther in protesting formed the Shmalkaldic League. They fought a war against Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in order to make Lutheranism legal. The fighting between this group and the emperor, Charles V, prevented any religious or even political unity. Finally, in order to end this fighting, the Peace of Augsburg was signed. In it, Lutheranism was legalized; however, Calvinism still was not. This angered the Calvinists and ultimately caused a legal division of religion in the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, because of this treaty, Germany could not unify religiously and could not develop a unified state. To conclude, the Thirty Year's War, Protestant Reformation and wars of religion, Shmalkaldic League, and Peace of Augsburg prevented the development of a unified Germany.

In conclusion, the political aspects of the peace of Westphalia, constant warfare, lack of strong leadership, and the equal power of Prussia and Austria along with the religious aspects of the Thirty Year's War and its economic devastation, Protestant Reformation and wars of religion, Shmalkaldic League, and Peace of Augsburg prevented the development of a unified Germany. While wars and rebellion contributed to the prevention of the development of a unified Germany, the main cause was the lack of political and religious unity. Thus, because of all of these factors, Germany was unable to form a unified state until the 1870s.